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From: **Office of the President**<[president@canisius.edu](mailto:president@canisius.edu)>

Date: Wed, May 8, 2019 at 2:23 PM

Subject: President's message regarding Baccalaureate Mass

To:

Dear Graduating Seniors,

I wish you all the best as you complete your final exams and papers as the last step toward graduation from Canisius. I look forward to celebrating your accomplishments at Commencement.

Several student leaders came to my office last week to express concerns on behalf of the senior class that Bishop Richard Malone will be the principal celebrant of the class's Baccalaureate Mass on Friday, May 17. They told me that several students objected to the Bishop's participation in the Mass because of his handling of the sex abuse crisis in the Diocese.

I truly understand these concerns. The horrific details of sexual abuse of minors and adults in the Diocese reported in a seemingly endless string of stories in the media has been devastating. It was for this reason that last August, I issued a statement to the Canisius College community about the sex abuse crisis in the Church. You can read that statement [here](#). My statement was so well received that it led me to work with a small group of laity to create a reform movement in the Diocese entitled The Movement to Restore Trust. At the center of our work is a concern for compassion, justice and healing for victims of sex abuse.

Over the past six months, we have mobilized the faithful of the Diocese to study and address what is a twin crisis within the Church: the handling of the sex abuse cases and the culture within the Church that has led to the sex abuse crisis. We have presented Bishop Malone with reports and recommendations of six working groups, each of which tackled a different aspect of this crisis. To his credit, he has accepted our recommendations and has formed a joint implementation team to begin the process of reform. Our work is underway. We have a long way to go but I am encouraged that we are moving in a positive direction.

Our work has received positive coverage in the media, both local and national, on several occasions. We have received three positive editorial endorsements from the Buffalo News. You can read these stories [here](#). I have received hundreds of emails from Canisius alumni telling me that what we are doing here at Canisius has made them so proud to be graduates of the college.

Since Bishop Malone has stepped up to the challenge and has created some real opportunity for reform and renewal, it's impossible for me to tell him that he is not welcome on our campus. I know that for those who have experienced sexual abuse, this explanation may be insufficient. I fully respect others' opinions and feelings. But I urged the student leaders who came to meet with me not to use the Baccalaureate Mass as a vehicle for protest, but as an opportunity to focus on the need for mercy, compassion and healing for victims of sex abuse. I urged them to reflect these themes in the readings and in the prayers of the faithful. Our homilist for the Mass, Fr. Tom Slon, S.J., is working with the students on making this Mass prayerful and respectful.

I will be praying for and with you at the Baccalaureate Mass. May God bless the great Canisius class of 2019.



**John J. Hurley**

**President**

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